

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
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EO 11652: N/A
TAGS:PINT PGOV DA
SUBJECT: DANISH ELECTION MOOD - DULL*

SUMMARY: FEW CHANGES ARE EXPECTED AS A RESULT OF THE FEB 15 DANISH ELECTIONS. THE CAMPAIGN IS BEING CARRIED OUT IN A TYPICALLY DANISH, UNEXCITING AND CIVILIZED MANNER. ALL ELEVEN PARTIES PRESENTLY REPRESENTED IN THE FOLKETING, AND PERHAPS ONE OTHER, WILL PROBABLY BE RETURNED TO THE NEW ONE. WHOEVER ENDS UP AS HEAD OF GOVERNMENT WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY BE FORCED INTO THE INTERMEDIABLE NEGOTIATING PROCESS CHARACTERISTIC OF THE DANISH PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM. PARLIAMENTARY ACCEPTANCE OF GLISTRUP'S PROGRESS PARTY BY THE OTHER PARTIES COULD MAKE THIS PROCESS EASIER BUT THIS IS NOT LIKELY EVEN THOUGH GLISTRUP WILL ATTRACT MORE VOTES THIS TIME THAN TWO YEARS AGO. WHATEVER HAPPENS, BASIC US INTERESTS ARE UNLIKELY TO BE AFFECTED. END SUMMARY.

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1. A FOREIGN OBSERVER OF THE NATIONAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN NOW IN PROGRESS WOULD BE TEMPTED TO WONDER WHY THE DANES BOTHER. EVEN THEY APATHETICALLY ASK: "WHAT, ANOTHER ELECTION? WHAT CAN IT SOLVE?" IN A COUNTRY WITH ELEVEN PARTIES IN PARLIAMENT AND A PROPORTIONAL SYSTEM WHICH GRANTS REPRESENTATION

THEREIN TO ANY GROUP WHICH CAN MUSTER TWO PERCENT OF THE VOTE (ABOUT 72,000) VOTES), THE CURRENT ELECTION PROMISES LITTLE CHANGE. EACH OF THE SMALL PARTIES FIGHTS TENACIOUSLY FOR ITS SEATS IN THE FOLKETING, USUALLY HANGING MUCH OF ITS ELECTION PLATFORM ON ONE OR TWO ISSUES WHICH MAINLY AFFECT A PARTICULAR INTEREST GROUP OF THE POPULATION. AND CURRENT POLLS SUPPORT THE AVERAGE DANES'S JUDGMENT OF WHAT IS LIKELY TO HAPPEN, FORECASTING ONLY FEW CHANGES IN THE PARLIAMENTARY CONFIGURATION.

2. COMPARED TO AN AMERICAN ELECTION, THIS ONE IS REALLY TAME STUFF. ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT AND BROADLY-CIRCULATED NEWSPAPERS IN THE COUNTRY (BERLINGKSE TIDENDE) HAS BEEN SHUT DOWN BY A LABOR DISPUTE; PARTY COFFERS, WITH ONLY TWO YEARS SINCE THE LAST ELECTION, ARE NOT FULL BY ANY MEANS AND THE NUMBER OF POSTERS AND PUBIC DISPLAYS IS CONSEQUENTLY LIMITED; SPACE ON NATIONAL RADIO AND TELEVISION HAS BEEN RIGOROUSLY PARCELLED OUT GIVING EACH OF THE PARTIES, REGARDLESS OF SIZE, THE SAME NUMBER OF MINUTES OF EXPOSURE; AND, WITH ONLY A TOTAL OF THREE WEEKS TO CAMPAIGN, NO REAL STEAM HAS BEEN GENERATED.

3. HUMAN PECULARITIES PLAY THEIR PART. THE PERSISTANT LOYALTY OF DANISH VOTERS TO COLORFUL POLITICAL FIGURES CONFUSES THE ISSUES WHICH ARE ALREADY DIFFICULT TO DEFINE. TYPICALLY, THE EXCITABLE, EMOTIONAL, AND RELATIVELY INEFFECTIVE LEADER OF THE SMALL CENTER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DEMOCRATIC PARTY, ERHARD JACOBSEN, IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO RETURN TO THE FOLKETING. AFTER ALL, HE HAS BEEN THERE FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS AND EXERTS A HPYNOTIC INFLUENCE OVER HIS MIDDLE-CLASS SUPPORTERS WHO ARE TURNED ON BY HIS FLAMBOYANT BEHAVIOR. GERT PETERSEN, HEAD OF A NATIONAL COMMUNIST SPLINTER PARTY WHICH BORKE WITH THE TRADITIONAL DAISH COMMUNIST PARTY IS CLEVER, INTELLIGENT AND ARTICULATE. THE FACT THAT HIS PARTY (SOCIALIST PEOPLES PARTY) IS ITSELF SERIOUSLY DIVIDED INTERNALLY INTO RADICAL AND MODERATE GROUPS WILL NOT LOSE HIM THE ALLEGIANCE HE HAS WON IN THE EARTS OF SOME VOTERS BECAUSE OF THEIR ATTRACTION TO THE STARTLING APPEARANCE OF THIS WILD-EYED, ECCENTRICALLY DRESSED AND THEATRICAL PERSON. A DANISH FOLKETING WITHOUT THESE TYPES WOULD NOT BE THE SAME, SOME DANES REASON, AND WE WILL BE ASTONISHED IF THEY ARE NOT RETURNED.

4. AND SO IT GOES* THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A SINGLE-

PARTY MAJORITY GOVERNMENT IN DENMARK AND NONE WILL EMERGE FROM THE FEBRUARY 15 ELECTION. SO, IF ANKER JORGENSEN IS AGAIN CHARGED WITH FORMING A GOVERNMENT, AS SEEMS LIKELY, HE WILL ONCE MORE BE CAUGHT UP IN THE INTERMINABLE NEGOTIATIONS REQUIRED BY THIS SYSTEM TO PUT TOGETHER A PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY IN SUPPORT OF ANY PROGRAM.

5. THE ISSUES, AS IN PRACTICALLY ALL DANISH ELECTIONS, REMAIN BASIC BREAD AND BUTTER ONES: UNEMPLOYMENT, TAX TREATMENT OF HOUSES, HIGH PRICES AND INFLATION. MOST OF THE PARTIES OF THE CENTER-RIGHT AGREE IN PRINCIPLE ON HOW THESE PROBLEMS SHOULD BE ADDRESSED--THROUGH AN INCOMES POLICY, FOR EXAMPLE. THE DIFFERENCES THAT THE PARTIES ARE ATTEMPTING TO SPELL OUT DURING THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN ARE OFTEN SO FINE AND COMPLICATED THAT THEY REQUIRE A POCKET CALCULATOR TO FOLLOW...BUT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MANY DANES ACTUALLY DO. EXCEPT FOR AN OCCASIONAL REFERENCE TO DEFENSE EXPENDITURES, SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS FIGURE ALMOST NOT AT ALL. THERE IS PRACTICALLY NO MENTION IN THE CAMPAIGN CONTEXT OF THE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS OF EC POLICY, NATO POSTURE, SOUTHERN AFRICA, RELATIONS WITH AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN EUROPEAN COMMUNIST COUNTRIES.

6. ALTHOUGH PERHAPS NOT EXPRESSED WITH THE SAME VIGOR AS TWO YEARS AGO, DANISH DISSATISFACTION WITH THE OPERATION OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM HAS GROWN. THE EASIEST WAY FOR DANES TO EXPRESS IT THIS TIME WOULD BE BY WITHHOLDING THEIR VOTES. BUT THESE CONSCIENTIOUS PEOPLE WITH THEIR STRONG SENSE OF CIVIC OBLIGATION WILL VOTE AS HEAVILY AS USUAL WITH ABOUT 85 PERCENT OF THOSE ELIGIBLE GOING TO THE POLLS. THE OTHER ALTERNATIVE FOR THEM IS TO CAST THEIR VOTES EITHER FOR MOGENS GLISTRUP'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY ON THE RIGHT OR THE THREE PARTIES OF THE FAR LEFT. OPINION POLLS CONTINUE TO INDICATE THAT BOTH EXTREMES WILL BE STRENGTHENED AND THIS GIVES CAUSE FOR FUTURE CONCERN. BARRING AN UNFORESEEABLE OUTCOME HOWEVER, US INTERESTS WILL BE AFFECTED ONLY MINORLY NOW WHATEVER THE RESULTS OF THIS LACKLUSTER CAMPAIGN AND ELECTION.

DEAN

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THE CAMPAIGN IS BEING CARRIED
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